

SCULPTURE

UNOBSERVED

GLASGOW'S ARCHITECTURAL SCULPTURE

This exhibition has been organised by James Gallacher as part of a training course run by the Collins Gallery, University of Strathclyde made possible through funding from the E.E.C.

Glasgow is renowned architecturally as one of the country's finest Victorian cities. However, the reputations of Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Alexander 'Greek' Thomson eclipse numerous other important native architects. Similarly the popularity of the languid forms of Art Nouveau and the egyp-to-grecian motifs of 'Greek' Thomson overshadow the less idiosyncratic examples of sculptural decoration in Glasgow architecture.

In the early 19th century there was no more prevalent form of public sculpture than the commemorative statue. Though now treated indifferently by the public these figures' identities reveal the city's cultural development and were symbols of moral and political aspirations. Many buildings within the city centre are complimented by sculpture which though not usually seen, merits individual appreciation.

From medieval times city life had revolved around the Mercat Cross. To the east in the Calton and Bridgeton areas sprang up the textile industries, cotton spinning, weaving and dyeing. The development of these industries depended upon a large workforce including many immigrant Irish families hence the erection of **Saint Mary's Church** in 1842 at Abercromby Street. Two unadorned angels worshipping the cross present an uncharacteristic example of Victorian pedimental sculpture more usually associated with large cluttered figure groups.

One purpose of architectural sculpture is to represent the business going on within a building. This can be seen clearly in the two relief panels sculpted by Alexander Handyside Ritchie for the **Commercial Bank of Scotland** built 1854-7 in Gordon Street. Two groups of putti are die-stamping and printing illustrating the banks twin coinage and paper currencies. David Rhind's refined Italian palazzo design created an image of grandeur and security which the propsering bank would be anxious to convey to its existing and potential customers.



Male figure, Caledonian Chambers

During the 1870's a private company was formed with the aim of providing a concert hall worthy of the city's size and importance. The commission fell to James Sellars who, greatly influenced by 'Greek' Thomson, designed the austere classical facade of the **Saint Andrew's Halls**, Granville Street, built 1873-7. Although representing the four arts of literature, painting, architecture and music the sculpture groups are physically detached from the building and do not interact with the intrinsic architectural design. There are two finely carved atlantes

flanking the entranceway and caryatides supporting the end pavilions which do form an integral part of the facade.

The same architect with the same sculptors John & William Mossman achieved an even finer result of collaboration on **The New Club** of 1879 in West George Street. Here the magnificent entranceway rises from two pedestals carved with arabesques—intricately carved floral panels. The empty triangular space above an arch known as the spandrel is often deadspace but here Sellars



◀ Spandrel figures, The New Club
Caryatid, St. Andrews Halls ▼
Atlantes, St. Andrews Halls▼

fills it with two delicately sculpted reclining figures above the arch separated by a keystone head.

These were two devices along with atlantes and caryatides which architects used to incorporate sculpture as part of their design. Atlantes and caryatides are male and female figures used as supports in place of columns. Atlantes are derived from the Greek god Atlas who was condemned to support forever the heavens on his shoulders and have a special significance in Glasgow as the country's major industrial centre.

The influence of architects trained at the Ecole des Beaux Arts began a transition in Glasgow from the favoured style of Italian renaissance to the more flamboyant French renaissance, from the classical to the baroque. In William Leiper's **Sun, Fire & Life**, building, West George Street, 1889–94 the ornate dormer gables, corbels and wrought iron balconies were adopted as French features. Richly ornate sculpture complements the finely detailed elevations. Two recumbent figures high on the Renfield Street elevation are copies of Day and Night from Michaelangelo's Medici Chapel, and two other pedestal statues are of Apollo and Aurora. These statues along with the capitals carved as signs of the zodiac and carvings of the sun are interpretive of the insurance company's name—Sun, Fire and Life.

Sir John James Burnet's design for the **Charing Cross Mansions**, Sauchiehall Street completed in 1891 again reveals the French influence with its steep roofs, balconied towers and ornate dormers. Six sculpted figures form the grand centrepiece around the clockface which rises to a galleried turret above. Between the numerals of the dial are small details of the zodiac while below cherubs unveil the city's coat of arms.

In 1888 Glasgow's first international exhibition introduced the work of contemporary European sculptors such as Rodin to the city. Its financial success paid for the second exhibition and the establishment of a permanent art gallery at Kelvingrove.

The sculptural groups required for such an important public building necessitated a competition which attracted submissions from nationally renowned sculptors Francis Derwent Wood and Sir George Frampton. Derwent Wood was commissioned to sculpt groups representing Music, Art and Painting. He had newly been appointed modelling master at the Glasgow School of Art under the directorship of Francis Newbery and during his period in Glasgow worked on several buildings including James Miller's **Caledonian Chambers**, Union Street, 1903. In the kneeling and contorted pairs of

male and female figures the sculptor shows his skill in rendering the latent power within the human form.

Charles Rennie Mackintosh's **Glasgow School of Art**, Renfrew Street, the first half of which was completed in 1897, indicates his interest in 17th century Scottish townhouse and castle architecture. However, the harsh geometric forms of the studio windows and the rear elevation are softened by the languid curves of the doorway surrounds and the art nouveau round relief above the main entrance.



During the 1930's James Miller, his assistant Richard Gunn and Edward Grigg Wylie were influenced by the resurgence of American neo-classic design. Based around a rectangular steel framework the characteristics of this style were tall sweeping facades and continuous vertical window bays with cast iron panels between. Sculptural decoration was used with restraint if at all, rectangular bas-reliefs replacing the fully rounded forms of earlier sculptors. Collaboration between sculptor and architect did continue. Miller who previously worked with Derwent Wood commissioned Gilbert Bayes, president of the Royal Society of British Sculptors, to produce six reliefs for the **Commercial Bank of Scotland** 1934. The repetition of Commerce and Industry as themes in his work symbolise the new prosperity of industrialisation in the 20th century but contrast with the old fashioned virtues of Wisdom and Contentment on the side elevation.

Edward Grigg Wylie fittingly chose the monumental American neo-classic style for the **Scottish Legal Life** building, Bothwell Street, 1927. The new offices of this expanding business at the time formed one of the city's highest commercial blocks. The lift speed of 450 feet per minute was the fastest in Britain and only one of the building's new technological wonders. The four relief panels by Archibald Dawson play a small part in the overall architectural design. Two panels refer to themes of Thrift and Prudence which were in keeping with the assurance society's aims. A third panel indicates the local industry on the Clyde, a worker with a model ship in his lap.

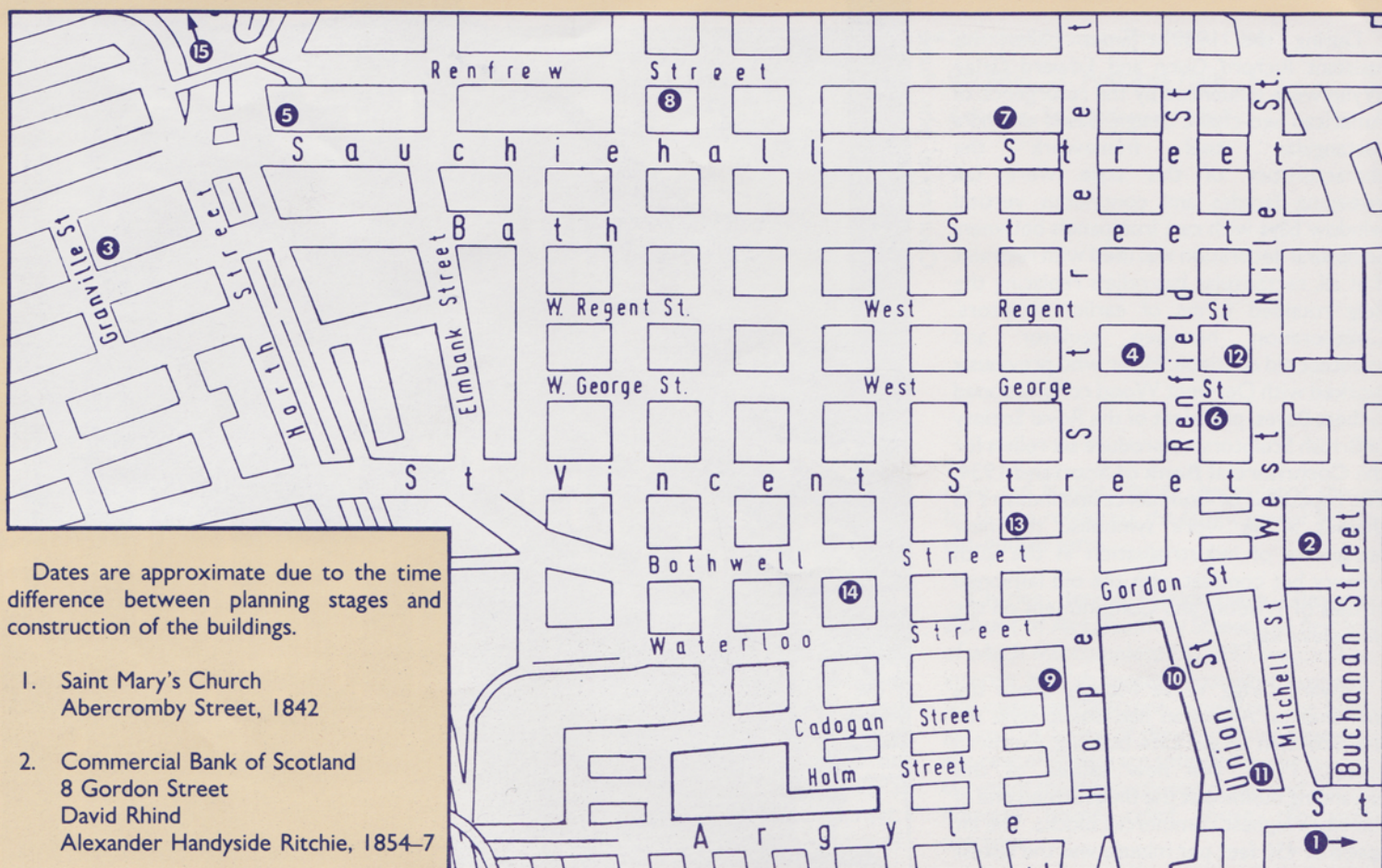
Dawson who was head of sculpture at the Glasgow School of Art was involved with the Scottish Committee on the Council for Art and Industry. He gave lectures to designers and draughtsmen on artistic design, good form and its practical applications in an attempt to forge links between the industry and aesthetics of the day. He also worked with Jack Coia on **Saint Columba's Church**, Hopehill Street, 1937 carving small religious pieces for the main entrance. Coia worked with many stained glass artists, sculptors and painters from the School of Art in the construction of his churches including Hugh Adam Crawford whose frescoes and Stations of the Cross were originally exhibited at the 1938 Glasgow Empire Exhibition.

There had always been a demand for sculpture fired by the desire for public statues and by the founding of the Necropolis in 1833. Good sculpture became a source of prestige not only for the artist but the building as architecture and the client as patron. With the 20th century introduction of new building materials glass, steel and reinforced concrete the collaborative ideal between architect and sculptor began to

Courtesy of John Hume



break down. The post war economic pressures and austerity of building design further eroded the strong Glasgow tradition of architectural sculpture.



1. Saint Mary's Church
Abercromby Street, 1842
2. Commercial Bank of Scotland
8 Gordon Street
David Rhind
Alexander Handyside Ritchie, 1854-7
3. Saint Andrew's Halls
Granville Street
James Sellars
John & William Mossman, 1873-7
4. The New Club
144 West George Street
James Sellars
John & William Mossman, 1879
5. Charing Cross Mansions
Sauchiehall Street
John James Burnet
William Birnie Rhind, 1891
6. Sun, Fire & Life Insurance
121 West George Street
William Leiper
William Birnie Rhind, 1889-94
7. 140 Sauchiehall Street
Hugh Barclay
William Birnie Rhind, 1891-95
8. Glasgow School of Art
167 Renfrew Street
Charles Rennie Mackintosh, 1897
9. Evening News Building
65 Hope Street
John James Burnet, 1899
10. Caledonian Chambers
75 Union Street
James Miller
Francis Derwent Wood, 1903

11. Stewart & McDonald
134 Argyle Street
Horatio Bromhead
William Vickers, 1903
12. Scottish Legal Life Assurance
81 Bothwell Street
Edward Grigg Wylie
Archibald Dawson, 1927
13. Commercial Bank of Scotland
70 West George Street
James Miller, Richard Gunn
Joseph Armitage, 1930
14. Commercial Bank of Scotland
30 Bothwell Street
James Miller, Richard Gunn
Gilbert Bayes, 1934
15. Saint Columba's Church
Hopehill Street
Jack Coia
Archibald Dawson, 1937

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